

“THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR”

All THE YEAR ROUND

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BY BASIL

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CHAPTER XLIII. ANASTASIA'S GRATITUDE.

It might be supposed that her narrow escape, through Archie's heroism, from sharing her mother's frightful fate would have stirred Anastasia to remorse for making him infamous. But this would be to take an altogether one-sided view of the case. Let us look at it from the young lady's point of view for a moment. It is true, she did not attempt to commit suicide, but this was due to her own strength of mind, not to Archie's innocence. Had he treated a weak-minded girl as he had treated her—won her virgin affections and then flung them aside as an outworn glove—she would probably enough have attempted, or committed suicide. Therefore, the press and public were not in the least misled on the point of Archie's guilt, but only on the point of her own strength of mind; and if she chose to misrepresent herself as feeble and a fool, why that piece of self-depreciation was no one's discredit or concern but her own.

Thus the case stood before Archie had rescued her. How did the fact that she owed him her life affect it? In this way. Either, as the Ryecote Herald suggested, he saved her because his old love was reawakened by her attempt at suicide for his sake, or he saved her because she was a woman—not this woman or that woman—but simply a woman in danger. In the first case, to confess that she had not attempted suicide at all would be to turn him back from the path of repentance and reparation; in the second case, she owed him no special gratitude for doing for her what he would have done for any other woman in the world.

Anastasia, being a very clear-headed young person, had all this definitely enough in her mind, and was not moved in the least, therefore, to make a clean breast of that business of her immersion in the mill-race. She was delighted to pose in the romantic attitude assigned to her in the Ryecote Herald—whose report was certain to be copied, or echoed, by every journal in England—and she was not without hope of making the romance of the reporter's version true. If Archie had not rescued her because he loved her again, he might yet love her again because he had rescued her. No one knew better than Anastasia that people in general, and generous people in particular, feel kindly towards those whom they benefit, and regard those whose fortunes they have made, or whose lives they have saved, as, in a sense, their creatures, with an affection which has, in fact, the same root as that of a father towards those who owe him their being. No one, we say, knew this better than Anastasia, for a helpless, wistful dependence was the fly to which all her fish rose invariably. Her very face, and especially her plaintive, pathetic, and appealing eyes, seemed to mark this part out for her as her rôle. “She had the eyes of a dog,” to use the Homeric expression, but not of the shameless, Homeric dog, but of the faithful, wistful, fearful, fawning spaniel, which looks up to its master for everything with a timorous trustfulness.

Anastasia, then, having over and over again put this principle to the proof—that the way to make people, especially generous people, like you, is, not to benefit them, but to allow them to benefit you—had some hope that Archie would feel kindly towards her in proportion to the great service he had rendered her. At any rate, whether, as the Ryecote Herald suggested,

such kind feeling was the cause of his heroic rescue of her, or whether it would be, as she hoped, its consequence, it would be mere and mad fatuity to freeze the flow of such feeling at its source by a confession of her imposition.

Such, as nearly as we can describe it, was the attitude of Anastasia's mind towards Archie, and his rescue of her after she had read the Ryecote Herald's superb description of the affair. She read it late in the afternoon of the next day in bed, for she had no clothes, and those of the daughter of the kindly neighbour who housed her would not fit her, she said—were not fit for her, she thought. Archie might call to enquire after her, and it would be better that he should not see her at all, but should hear that she was ill in bed, than that he should find her in a dowdy dress. She would not rise, therefore, till the clothes she had sent for to her Ryecote dressmaker, etc., first thing in the morning, arrived. The clothes arrived at last, but no Archie appeared to appreciate them. Probably he was himself worn out, and compelled to rest after the exhaustion and excitement of the past night. But neither did he appear next morning, and as the day wore on Anastasia resolved upon a bold stroke. As he did not come to enquire after her, she must go to enquire after him. Indeed, common gratitude compelled her—as soon as her strength and her sorrow would permit her—to relieve her surcharged heart of what little of the debt she owed the saviour of her life as weak words could express. Absorbed by this feeling, Anastasia, clothed in crape, and closely veiled, crept out of the house, and down the village street to the doctor's.

She was fortunate. Mrs. John was not in, while Archie was, and was up—which he had not been all yesterday. She did not send in her name or card, but said simply that she wished to see Mr. Guard for a few minutes. Archie leaped at once to the conclusion that the young lady, the servant described as tall and closely veiled, must be Ida, and hurried therefore eagerly into the room.

Anastasia! It was a double disappointment. The woman of all others he least cared to see in place of her for whom of all others he longed most.

"Miss Bompas!"

"I intrude? I could not help it—I had to come to say—May I sit down? I am not well," falteringly and appealingly.

Archie stepped forward to hand her a

chair, but before he could reach it, she exclaimed with a kind of sob, "Oh, Archie!" and sank overcome into his arms.

At this moment the door opened, and Ida entered—entered only to shrink back as though stabbed. She got back to the door and to the station, she hardly knew how, though any one meeting her might have thought her a model of stately composure. Anastasia had seen her swift entry and exit, but Archie had neither seen nor heard them. His back was turned to the door, which in his eager entrance to meet, as he hoped, Ida, he had not shut behind him. Thus Ida came and went like a shadow, seen only by Anastasia, who discreetly said nothing of the vision.

Archie having disengaged himself as soon as he could, consistently with common politeness, from the clinging embrace of the overpowered and overpowering Anastasia, helped her to a chair, but remained himself standing, as an expression of his hope that the interview would be brief.

Anastasia, leaning back in the chair, overcome, looked up at him with an appeal as for life in her wide wistful eyes.

"Let me get you a glass of wine, Miss Bompas," said Archie as an answer to the look, in a tone of the iciest conventionality, stepping to the bell.

"Don't ring!" she cried, clutching his arm. "I must speak to you alone—I must say—I must try to say how your heroism in saving my poor life at the risk of your own—"

"Pray say nothing about it," said Archie, disengaging his arm almost roughly, and speaking with a fretful impatience. He, too, had read the Ryecote Herald, and was disgusted with every line of the report; but most of all, of course, with its suggestion that it was the revival of his love for Anastasia which had moved him to risk his life for hers. "Pray say nothing about it, Miss Bompas; I merely did what anyone would have done, and what I should have done for anyone," laying upon the last word a stress whose meaning was not to be mistaken.

"Oh, why did you save my life?" cried she wildly. "Death were better than this!" burying her face in her hands.

Archie did not say what passed through his ungallant mind: "You didn't seem to think so at the time."

Taking prompt advantage of her being unable to see and intercept him, he stepped across to the bell and rang it. There was silence till the maid appeared. She

took longer than usual to answer the bell, because she was only at the other side of the door eavesdropping. However, Anastasia, though she heard the bell, said nothing in the interval, for she knew not what to say. She remained with her face buried in her hands, meditating her next step, without much result.

Upon the appearance of the maid Archie asked :

“ Is Dr. Dakin in ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Pray ask him to come here for a moment.”

He had learned by bitter experience the danger of being alone for any time with this woman, and he meant to put her as a patient in need of a restorative into the doctor’s hands and to retire under this cover. However, Anastasia, divining his design, started up suddenly and said distractedly :

“ You think my reason is gone again ? But no—not now—not yet ! ”

Having shot this Parthian dart, alluding to her attempt at suicide and to the doctor’s being an expert in lunacy, Anastasia tottered to the door, where the doctor met and ushered her out with a bow so elaborate as to seem ironical.

Anastasia was wildly wroth with Ida. Yes, it was chiefly against her rival that her fury rose and raged. She would give the world for revenge, and especially for a form of vengeance which would inflict her own agonies upon her rival by alienating Archie and Ida as widely and hopelessly as she and Archie seemed alienated now. Fortune favoured her. She found when she reached home a weapon fitted to her hand which would, she hoped, help to do the work. By the afternoon’s post there came for her a letter from her lawyer, accompanying a packet of Archie’s letters, and explaining the reason of their being returned. After his heroic rescue of her, Miss Bompas would probably not care to persist in the suit for breach of promise, but, if she were so inclined, no barrister could be found to ask for, or jury to give, a verdict against her gallant preserver. In truth, the lawyer knew the case to be hollow and hopeless. Anastasia, with a mind full and furious with thirst for revenge, thought first of enclosing the most compromising of the letters to Ida. But on re-reading them with the view of choosing the warmest for this purpose, she came upon one which altered her plan. It ran thus :

“ DEAREST NESTY,—You thank me as

extravagantly as if we were strangers—as if I needed other thanks than your forgiveness. You do forgive me freely, fully, wholly—don’t you ? I did not expect it ; I can hardly believe it. I shall not really believe it till I hear it from your lips—have it signed and sealed by your lips. Come over this afternoon, as I cannot come to you. Coast clear at four o’clock. Be sure you come.—Ever and ever yours,

“ ARCHIE.”

This letter, which referred to some lover’s quarrel in Cambridge, made up by one of Archie’s extravagant presents, was undated, and it occurred to Anastasia so to date it as to make it seem to refer to Archie’s rescue of her, and to the meeting that afternoon which Ida must have considered as the proverbial “ *amoris integratio*. ” She had merely to date in figures the year and the month, as well as the day of the month, to prevent the detection or suspicion of forgery. It needed only such a note to confirm the impression Ida must have got from the spectacle of Anastasia in Archie’s arms almost at the very hour named for the tryst in the letter. As for the chance of the misunderstanding being cleared up at the next meeting of the cousins, this—on Dick’s information—Anastasia counted small ; for there would in all probability be no such meeting. Archie had pledged himself to quit England, and Ida to see him but once before he went ; and it was plainly to this farewell meeting she had come that afternoon. She was little likely to come again if the impression then made upon her was confirmed beyond the reach of a doubt ; as it must be by this letter.

But how was the letter to be conveyed to Ida ? To send it directly would, of course, be to invite suspicion. It must be sent through Dick, and Dick fortunately turned up that evening. Anastasia was chilling in her reception of him, and gave him soon to understand that his visits must cease. Dick was a good deal taken aback. Had the shock of her mother’s horrible death suddenly rendered this not very promising young penitent proper to primness ? He demanded an explanation. Anastasia gave it with great dignity. She and Mr. Guard had become reconciled. Dick could not and would not believe in such a reconciliation, but ridiculed it till Anastasia was provoked into producing the conclusive letter. Dick was staggered. After all, why should she throw him over unless she had found a new protector ? Dick,

eager to be convinced, was convinced. Instead of being most dejected and wretched at his dismissal and replacement by Archie, he was in wild spirits, and rallied Anastasia upon the recovery of her first love. He gracefully attributed Archie's rescue of her and return to his allegiance to his desperate dread of the breach of promise suit. To this Anastasia condescended to make the conclusive answer that all the letters on which alone the suit rested were burned in the fire, which left her nothing in all the world—piteously.

Having thus guarded against the possibility of a suspicion springing up in Dick's mind that the letter was an old one, Anastasia affected a great eagerness to get it back; and, on Dick's manifesting an equal eagerness to keep it, she again became piteous about the state of utter destitution to which the fire had brought her. Dick took the very palpable hint, and, by making over to her in his reckless way all the money he had in his purse, put a sudden stop to her importunity about the letter.

It will be seen that Anastasia managed this business well—better even than she had hoped. For she soon found that both Dick and Ida were to go to London on Monday for a visit of an indefinite length; she lost nothing, therefore, by her dismissal of Dick; while Ida would be beyond the reach of any personal explanation from Archie.

Thus the estrangement of the cousins—thrice desirable, not only for the mortification of her rival, but as the first step towards the recovery of Archie—not even yet despaired of—seemed to have been skilfully and securely contrived by the ready resources of Anastasia.

She would have been still more confident and exultant if she could have followed Dick in spirit to The Keep, Hurrying home he at once sought his aunt.

"Those two really have made it up," he exclaimed with unusual vivacity.

"So I hear."

"Why, who told you?"

"Ida."

"Ida!"

Then his aunt told him what she had extracted, by dogged pumping, out of Ida on her return, looking like death.

"In his arms! By Jove! then it is true. It was the meeting the letter appointed."

"What letter?"

Dick produced it. When she had read it, she exclaimed, throwing back her head in amazement:

"Well! They're made for each other, those two. But," glancing sharply at Dick, "how did you get hold of the letter?"

"Oh, easily enough," answered he carelessly. "Having heard on good authority in Ryecote that they were reconciled, I looked her up to get to the real truth of the matter. When I charged her chaffingly with circulating a report she knew to be false, she produced the letter. I think she'd have shown it to anyone, she was in such spirits about it."

"And allowed anyone to take it away?" with another sharp glance at Dick.

"For a consideration."

"Do you mean to say she sold it to you?"

"Yes; she sold it to me, and well too."

"What a woman! She's capable of forging it," with a sudden suspicion of its genuineness.

"With what object? No; I don't think it a forgery. But Ida would know his writing."

This he spake, knowing that Ida wouldn't read a letter not intended for her eyes. His aunt might, however, ask her to identify the writing, giving as her reason the contents of the letter. The same thought was in his aunt's mind at the moment.

"She'll not read it, Dick."

"No; but she could glance at the writing and say if it is her cousin's hand. You can explain why you wish to know."

His aunt understood his meaning, and approved of it. It would be another and a cruel stab to Ida; but the sooner this unworthy love was stabbed to death and she put out of the pain of it, the better.

"I shall ask her," she said, quitting the room to seek Ida.

Ida was lying on a couch in her own room, prostrate, and in a kind of stupor, from which Mrs. Tuck's knock and voice roused her. She rose, unlocked the door, and confronted Mrs. Tuck with a face so lost—to use the word which most nearly describes its expression—that Mrs. Tuck's heart was wrung with pity.

"I'm so sorry to disturb you, dear—there, lie down; no, no; pray lie down—I shall not stay a moment." After Ida lay down Mrs. Tuck remained silent for a full minute, nervously and lovingly stroking the girl's hair the while. At last she said, speaking with a nervous haste: "Ida dear, Richard has been for your sake to see that woman to ask her to contradict the report she spread all over Ryecote of her recon-

ciliation with your cousin. But, instead of contradicting it, she produced this letter, which she declares he wrote to-day to her. It says she mustn't thank him for saving her life, as her forgiveness of his desertion of her is thanks enough ; and it asks her to come and see him this afternoon at four—when no one else would be in—and to seal then their reconciliation with her lips. We think the letter must be a forgery, dear, and we want you just to glance at the writing, and say it is not your cousin's."

Ida took the letter, but her hand trembled so, and her eyes were so dim and dizzy, that she could see nothing distinctly for some time. When she could see distinctly, the letter dropped, and she hid her face in both hands.

"My poor child ! My poor girl !" cried Mrs. Tuck with exceeding tenderness, kissing her forehead again and again.

This warmth of tenderness melted the icy reserve which usually hid Ida's heart as with a stone. She put both her arms about Mrs. Tuck's neck, hid her face upon her shoulder, and broke down in a passion of sobs heartrending to hear from so self-contained a girl.

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

LEICESTERSHIRE. PART I.

ALTHOUGH between the counties of Warwick and Leicester old Watling Street forms only an arbitrary frontier, yet the ancient highway corresponds with a veritable division in soil and people. The broad green pastures of Leicestershire were long the home of a race of sturdy yeomen, whose Danish blood has manifested itself in many ways. Leicestershire is distinctly less feudal than its neighbour, and, though the Norman barons sprinkled the land thickly with their castles, most of them were razed to the ground in the days of the Plantagenets, and have left few traces of their existence. There are fewer great abbeys and more fine parish churches than in other adjacent counties, and the county has more to boast of in its great graziers and cattle-breeders than in its great lords or distinguished churchmen. Its fame as a hunting county, with its noted hunting-centres of Melton Mowbray and Market Harborough, is indeed of comparatively modern growth. But long before the wealthy and leisured sportsmen of modern times had begun to resort to its grassy vales, its squires and yeomen loved the

sound of the horn and the merry cry of hounds, and to meet, when the fields were clear and the work of the year was done, to hunt the timid hare and wily fox. The stout peasantry of Leicestershire are of ancient fame for their diet of beans, and there are sundry parishes which once had the credit of raising beans exclusively as the food of their population. But there was no lack of bacon either, to flavour the dish, nor of good, wholesome cheese, nor of any of the products of the dairy. The industrial population of the county seem to be of a somewhat different race, which has migrated southwards from the spurs of the great Pennine range of hills, about which have sprung up all our enduring industrial settlements.

Divided from the hill-ranges of Derbyshire by the great basin of the Trent, Charnwood Forest forms the one wild, rough portion of the county, with Bardon Hill as its chief summit. And Bardon Hill commands a vast, wide prospect, a perfect ocean of land, with Lincoln Minster to be made out in the extreme distance, some sixty miles away, and all the wealthy midlands lying at its feet.

Oh, Charnwood, be thou called the choicest of thy kind,
The like in any place what flood hath apt to find,
No tract in all this isle, the proudest let her be,
Can show a sylvan nymph for beauty like to thee.

The sylvan beauties of Charnwood, however, are of the past. The axe has left its sides bare and desolate, the woodland-nymphs have taken flight, and a railway now runs through the heart of the former forest. Yet are there many places of interest on its borders. There, in a corner of the county, lies Ashby de la Zouche, which Scott has made famous for its tournament in Ivanhoe. The scene of the tournament is pointed out in a field about a mile north-westward of the town, near the village of Smisby, just on the borders of Derbyshire. The castle is of later date, partly of the Tudor period, a rich and magnificent ruin, dismantled by the Parliament after the collapse of the King's cause in the civil wars. Here was the seat of Lord Hastings, beheaded by Richard the Third.

Close by is Coleorton, the seat of the Beaumonts, a family of literary and artistic culture, of which the dramatic poet of Elizabeth's days was a distinguished member.

The haunt of him who sang how spear and shield
In civil conflict met on Bosworth Field ;
And of that famous youth, full soon removed
From earth, perhaps by Shakespeare's self approved.
Fletcher's associate, Jonson's friend beloved.

Here Wordsworth was an honoured guest, in the early years of the century. Perhaps the cedar-tree still flourishes,

Planted by Beaumont's and by Wordsworth's hands.

But the original seat of the family, and the birthplace of the dramatist, lies nearer the forest :

Beneath yon eastern ridge, the craggy bound,
Rugged and high of Charnwood Forest ground,
Stand yet, but, stranger, hidden from thy view,
The ivied ruins of forlorn Grace Dieu.

The nunnery of Grace Dieu was founded by Lady Roesin de Verdun in the thirteenth century, and is thus described in the records of the commissioners who were employed in the suppression of religious houses in the reign of Henry the Eighth : "This house standeth low in a valley, upon a little brook, in a solitary place, compassed round with a high and strong stone wall, within which the nuns had made a garden in resemblance of that upon Mount Olivet." It is further recorded that this sequestered retreat of simple-minded, religious women was "sould by the king's commissioners to John Bewman, gent," who, it seems, had been the steward of the convent, and was besides a surveyor of the county. This John Beaumont's son, Francis, became a serjeant-at-law, and afterwards a judge, and the judge's second son, Sir John, who eventually succeeded to his father's estate, was himself a poet of the minor degree, the chronicler in rhyme of Bosworth Field, alluded to in Wordsworth's lines. To this poem of Bosworth Field we shall presently recur, as Sir John is a good witness, from his intimate knowledge of the scene of the combat, of which his grandfather might have had many stories to tell, derived from actual eye-witnesses of the fight.

Francis Beaumont, the dramatist, was the younger brother of this Sir John, and in 1596 was admitted a gentleman commoner at Broadgate Hall, Oxford, described as a principal nursery for students in civil and common law, a nursery in the literal sense of the word, one would think, if the mass of students were of the like age as Beaumont, who was ten years old, it seems, or, perhaps, twelve, when he entered college. But that was a precocious age ; Francis Bacon was only twelve when he was sent to Cambridge ; life began earlier and ended sooner, it seems, than now, and for all the long list of plays that witness to the industry of the collaborators, Beaumont at his death had barely passed his thirtieth year. These later,

busy years were passed not in Leicestershire, but on Bankside, near the Globe Theatre, where Beaumont and Fletcher lived together in an intimate friendship wonderful to our days, especially in men of letters ; they shared the same bed, had one bench between them, one cloak, and so on. Beaumont died in the same year as Shakespeare, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, at the entrance of St. Benedict's Chapel, near the Earl of Middlesex's monument. The position of his grave suggested his introduction into the brilliant galaxy of the greatest of poets by the author of the well-known epitaph :

Renowned Spenser lye a thought more nigh
To learned Chaucer ; and rare Beaumont lye
A little nearer Spenser ; to make roome
For Shakespeare in your threefold fourfold toombe.

In Charnwood, too, lie the ruins of another priory, of Ulverscroft, sequestered in a deep valley, of which we have only the knowledge of its founder, Robert Bossu, or Crook-back, known as the good Earl of Leicester, a great friend to the monks, and founder of religious houses in the twelfth century.

Passing to the south of Charnwood, we come into the land of beans, where a township is known as Barton-in-the-Beans, from having been once surrounded by beanfields. And not far south lies Market Bosworth, a thriving little town, not of much interest in itself, but well known from its connection with the battle-field. Bosworth Field lies to the south-east of the town, adjacent to the canal, and a spring that rises there, from which, according to tradition, King Richard slaked his thirst in the heat and fury of the battle, still bears his name.

Both Richard and Henry seemed to have directed the march of their armies with the main object of meeting each other, and putting their claims to the test of a decisive battle. As far as numbers went, the King had greatly the advantage, and Richmond's force, chiefly Welsh and Bretons, with a sprinkling of adventurous knights from the French Court, could hardly have withstood the shock of the sturdy fighting-men of the land, had these been devoted to the cause or confident in their leaders. And then there were the men of Lancashire, whom Lord Stanley held aloof from the array of either battle ; but Lord Stanley, it was well-known, was pledged to the Earl of Richmond, his son-in-law, and was only kept from joining him openly by consideration for his eldest son, held by Richard as an hostage.

In Richmond's march had been a plain and straight enough, along old Watling Street from Shrewsbury; while Richard's forces mustered along the still more ancient Fosseway that strikes through the heart of Leicestershire. But Richard, always bold and resolute, had struck across by bye-ways, and over the open country from Leicester, and Richmond faced about to meet him. There was little advantage in position; the ground, level and open, was watered by an insignificant stream, that formed a green swamp to the south of Richard's position.

The night before the battle, the two armies were encamped within sight of each other, and Shakespeare has described the tortured night spent by Richard, and contrasted it with the calm repose of Richmond. Shakespeare's contemporary, Sir John Beaumont, in his poem of Bosworth Field, already alluded to, has made use of the same machinery—the spectres of those whom Richard has slain. But both are agreed as to the gallant front shown by the King when the time came for fighting.

He rides about the ranks, and strives t' inspire
Each brest with part of his unweared fire,
writes Beaumont, while Shakespeare makes Richard exclaim, "A thousand hearts are great within my bosom!" as he rides forward to deliver his spirit-stirring address:

Fight, gentlemen of England! fight, bold yeomen!
Draw, archers, draw your arrows to the head!

The morning of the battle showed gloomy and overcast.

The sun will not be seen to-day;
The sky doth frown and lower upon our army.

But, as the day went on, the sun came out from among the clouds, and cast a lurid glare over the opening of the battle. According to the poem, Brackenbury, the former Lieutenant of the Tower, was sent to Lord Stanley. If he did not join battle instantly, his son should die. To which the earl replied with quite Spartan fortitude:

If with my George's blood he stains his throne,
I thank my God I have more sonnes than one.

But he promises to remain neutral if his son be spared. According to Shakespeare, Richard actually gave the order for George Stanley's death, while Norfolk interposes:

My lord, the enemy is pass'd the marsh;
After the battle let George Stanley die.

And this marsh is described in the poem as passed by Lord Oxford, who led the van of Richmond's army:

A marsh lay betweene, which Oxford leaves
Upon his right hand, and the sunne receives
Behind him with advantage of the place.

The advance of Richmond's van was covered with a cloud of arrows from the bowmen, and Norfolk, whose men suffered heavily from the discharge, advanced in rather scattered order to meet the foe. In the confused encounter that followed, all agree that Richard fought for his crown with all the personal valour of a paladin of old. With kingly rage and scorn, he drove into the ranks of the foe.

And shall this Welshman, with his ragged troupe,
Subdue the Norman and the Saxon line?
But he felt that his men fought faintly.
Of all the great nobles of England, only
Norfolk and his son were heartily with him.
Percy held back, while Stanley lay like a
thundercloud on the flank of the King's
army, ready to fall upon it at the first
repulse. And yet Richard, by his personal
prowess alone, almost retrieved the fortunes
of the day. He cut his way to where
Richmond's standard—royal or rebel,
according to the fortunes of the hour—
waved in the unbroken centre of his host.
Nothing could withstand the terrible sword
of the last of the Plantagenets. The
bristled boar was at bay, and the attacking
hounds were scattered to right and left.
Down went Richmond's standard-bearer,
cloven to the chin.

With scorn he throwes the standard to the ground.

Another stroke might have ended the
battle, and altered the destinies of England,
in Richmond's death; but the gigantic Sir
John Cheney threw himself between, and
was brought lifeless to the ground by the
King's sword. By this time, however, a
fresh, unweared troop of Stanley's had
come to the succour of Richmond, and
Richard, driven back in the press from
within reach of his enemy, was borne to
the ground by the sheer weight of numbers.
Where, trampled down and hewed with many
swords,

He softly uttered these his dying words:
"Now strength no longer fortune can withstand,
I perish in the centre of my land."

And thus died, not unworthily, the last of
the old race of kings. There fell about
four thousand of the vanquished, with the
Duke of Norfolk, Lord Ferrers of Chartley,
Sir Richard Radcliffe, Sir Robert Piercy,
and Sir Robert Brackenbury. The body
of the King, surrounded by dead enemies,
was picked up and thrown across a horse,
and taken to Leicester, where it was
received by the monks of Leicester Abbey,
who, mindful of the benefits they had
received from the royal line, gave it
honourable burial. Of the old abbey of

Leicester hardly a vestige now remains, and the site of the royal burial-place is unknown, as well as the destiny of the King's remains. Christopher Wren related, on the authority of his grandfather, that, at the dissolution of the abbey, the place of King Richard's burial fell into the bounds of a citizen's garden, afterwards purchased by Robert Herrick, Mayor of Leicester, who erected a pillar over it as a monument. Since then the stone coffin, it is said, was dug up and used as a water-trough before The White Horse Inn. Possibly enough, however, the King's body still rests undisturbed beneath the soil of some garden or back-yard. Wherever the royal tomb may be, that of Cardinal Wolsey is not far distant; for Leicester Abbey, it will be remembered, was the last resting-place of the great cardinal, as he journeyed from York towards the lodging his ungrateful master had prepared for him in the Tower.

At last with easy roads he came to Leicester ;
Lodg'd in the abbey ; where the reverend abbot
With all his convent honourably received him ;
To whom he gave these words : " O, father abbot,
An old man, broken with the storms of state,
Is come to lay his weary bones among ye :
Give him a little earth for charity ! "

But even the astute Wolsey could hardly have foreseen for how short a time it would be in the power of the abbot to preserve his tomb from desecration. Wolsey himself was no great friend to the monasteries ; his plan was, no doubt, gradually to suppress them, and devote their revenues to educational purposes—a scheme too grand and unselfish for the times. But that it would be possible with a stroke of the pen to subvert the whole of these ancient foundations and appropriate the most of their riches to the pleasures of the king and the greed of his favourites, how little likely all this would have seemed to the eyes of the ruined cardinal !

And now nothing but an old wall remains of Leicester Abbey, while the castle has only a few fragments to show of its former strength. Even so early as the days of Richard the Third, however, the castle was in a state of decay and uninhabitable, the King preferring to sleep, on his way to Bosworth, at the Blue Boar Inn, by the High Cross, rather than in the dismal, dismantled chambers of his royal castle. The old inn survived to well on in the present century—and the old four-post bedstead, in which, according to tradition, Richard slept, is said to be preserved at Rothly Temple.

There is little in the present state of Leicester to remind us of its great antiquity as a principal Roman station on the great Fosseway, except the testimony of Roman coins found in the neighbourhood and preserved in the town museum, and a military column—a Roman milestone, in fact—which is satisfactory evidence that here was the station known as Ratae. The name seems rather to point to a confederacy of villages or townships, and the Saxon name Ligora Ceaster, or Leger Ceaster, may also be thought to point in the same direction ; for pretty certainly it is not Legeceaster, or the camp of the legion, as many have thought, as it was never the headquarters of a Roman legion. Anyhow, there is a probability of a continued occupation, perhaps as an industrial settlement, from remote times. The monetarii of Leicester were long famous, and have left in evidence a series of coins, of which collections have been formed, stretching from the days of Athelstane the Saxon to those of Henry Plantagenet.

At the present day Leicester chiefly concerns itself with stockings, and lines of warehouses and factories have obliterated nearly every trace of old Leicester. In this industry Leicester and Nottingham may be called twin cities ; and, although separated by a long stretch of breezy wolds, yet everywhere on the way are villages where stockingers may be found, and the noisy creak of the stocking-frame is to be heard. There is a respectable antiquity about this stocking manufacture, which came in from the Low Countries in the time of Elizabeth. Bluff King Hal wore hose of cloth cut and stitched, but the knitted silk stockings were worn during the reign of Queen Bess ; but we find it difficult to believe that there was ever a time when the old ladies of the county were entirely ignorant of the use of the knitting-pin. The magnificent Earl of Leicester is described by a chronicler of the period, as apparelled all in white, including his stocks of hose-knit silk. Malvolio's yellow stockings, with their admired cross-gartering, will be familiar to all. The silken, luxurious stockings, affected by the gallants of the Court, seem to have been the first manufactured, but the humbler cotton and worsted soon followed.

Other neighbouring towns share the industry with Leicester.

There is Hinckley, for instance, not an uninteresting town, well placed on an

eminence commanding the country round, and said to have been a place of strength once upon a time, with traces of wall and ditch, that seem to have encompassed a larger space than is now occupied by the town. A part of this wall, called the Jewry, suggests the presence of a Jewish colony, and Jews, by the way, were not allowed to settle in Leicester, where Simon de Montfort's charter stipulates that no Jew or Jewess to the end of the world shall inhabit or remain. But what the Jews found to do at Hinckley in the middle ages is not at all clear, unless they used it as a half-way station between London and York, a little retired from the main line of traffic, and yet not far out of the way. Old Isaac of York, and his beautiful daughter Rebecca, may have stopped here on their way home, taking Ashby de la Zouche and its tournament as the next stage of the journey.

As mysterious as the dispersion and settlement of the Jews, is the distribution of the stocking manufacture. Why should it stop short here, and extend itself there? Why should not stockings, for instance, be made as freely in Bedfordshire as in Leicestershire? And why should the stocking-frame die away in Leicestershire itself as you approach Lutterworth, which is a pleasant little agricultural capital, noted as the scene of John Wycliffe's ministry? There still stands the ancient church of which he was the priest, where are shown the reformer's pulpit, his vestment, and the monument which has been erected over his empty tomb. For it will be remembered that Wycliffe's remains were disinterred and burnt for heresy by order of the bishop, and the ashes cast into the neighbouring River Swift.

But the ashes of the reformer thus scattered abroad seemed as seed sown on fruitful ground, for everywhere the new faith sprang up, and the Lollards, with their field-preachers, and fresh enthusiastic flocks of listeners, suggesting the Wesleyan revival of a later age, spread fast and thick over the country. Great nobles, like John of Gaunt, saw their opportunity in the new religious movement, a faction ready-made to their hands, and only waiting for leaders. But the strength of the movement was no doubt in the yeomanry and class of smaller landholders, and in the rising commercial interests of the larger towns. The peasantry and upper classes of Leicestershire, for instance, seem to have been devotedly attached to the ancient

faith, and joined in large numbers that pilgrimage of grace, which, as a protest against the suppression of the religious houses, made the throne of the Tudors totter for a moment.

Another hero of the Reformation and martyr to its cause was of the county, and sprang from its raciest blood. Hugh Latimer, who was born at Thurcaston, some four miles from Leicester, and was fifteen years old when Bosworth Field was fought, lived to preach before King Edward the Sixth, and, in his venerable age, was brought by his brother ecclesiastics to the stake. Latimer, in his sermon before King Edward, gives such a pleasing graphic account of his father, a typical yeoman of those days, that although it has often been quoted, it may be given here in full :

" My father was a yeoman and had no lands of his own; only he had a farm of three or four pounds by the year at the uttermost, and hereupon he tilled so much as kept half-a-dozen men. He had walks for an hundred sheep; and my mother milked thirty kine. He was able and did find the king a harness with himself and his horse while he came to the place that he should receive the king's wages. I can remember that I buckled his harness when he went to Blackheath field. He kept me to school, or else I had not been able to have preached before the king's majesty now (Edward the Sixth). He married my sisters with five pounds or twenty nobles a piece; so that he brought them up in godliness and fear of God. He kept hospitality for his poor neighbours and some alms he gave to the poor; and all this he did of the same farm; where he that now hath it payeth sixteen pounds by the year or more, and is not able to do anything for his prince, for himself, nor for his children, or give a cup of drink to the poor."

SLIPS OF THE TONGUE AND PEN.

" If people only knew beforehand," once observed a profound philosopher, " the ridicule they bring upon themselves by the unreflecting use of their tongue and pen, how many absurdities would have remained unspoken and unwritten!" There is no denying the truth of this remark; but it is far from holding good in every case. Certain of our fellow-creatures, either from habit or from a natural deficiency as regards intelligence, seem to be incapable of reflection, and to say or write invariably

whatever comes uppermost in their minds without the remotest idea of its being amenable to criticism. Examples of this unfortunate infirmity are by no means rare, and have furnished the compilers of "ana" from time immemorial with more or less authentic materials for the amusement of their readers. Many of these, from frequent use, have been worn threadbare; but it is still possible for an industrious gleaner—we hope so, at least—to extract from comparatively neglected sources a few stray "naïvetés," which, if not absolutely new, may perhaps be considered worthy of reproduction.

One of our literary celebrities, happening not long ago to visit a lady of his acquaintance, found her engaged in watching with great interest the freaks of a tame raven hopping about the room. "Come and see my purchase," she said. "I bought him yesterday." "In memory of Edgar Poe?" he asked. "No," she replied; "you'll never guess why." "I give it up." "Well, then, I was told that ravens live three hundred years, so I thought I would buy one; just to satisfy myself whether they did or not."

The following dates from the wars of the League, when a report having spread that the Comte de Soissons had been killed in battle, one of his intimates, anxious for his safety, dispatched a letter to him, of which this is a literal transcript: "They say that you have gained a victory, but that you are dead. Please let me know the exact state of things, for I should be truly sorry if anything had happened to you."

The husband of the celebrated Madame Geoffrin was fond of reading, and often had recourse to an obliging friend, possessor of a well-stocked library. Wishing to peruse a certain book of travels, he borrowed the first volume, and having finished it, took it back to the owner, and asked for the second, which, in a fit of abstraction, he left on the table, carrying away the one he had just returned, and reading it over again without perceiving his error. His wife, seeing him deeply absorbed in the contents, enquired how he liked the work. "It is extremely interesting," he replied; "but it strikes me that the author is rather too apt to repeat himself."

The same Geoffrin, on returning home one night from the theatre, was asked by a lady what piece he had seen. "I really cannot tell you, madame," was his answer:

"I was in such a hurry to secure my place that I never thought of looking at the bill."

After the battle of Austerlitz a grave-digger, engaged in burying the dead, was suddenly interrupted in his work by an exclamation of horror from the officer whose duty it was to superintend the operation, and who indignantly affirmed that one of the bodies just consigned to the earth still breathed. "That shows how little you are in the habit of this sort of thing," coolly retorted the grave-digger; "if you were to pay attention to all they say, there wouldn't be a single dead man among them!"

The inhabitants of a village in the South of France, having decided on the acquisition of a picture for the altar of their church, deputed two of their number to make the necessary arrangements with an eminent painter residing in a neighbouring town. The subject chosen being the martyrdom of St. Sebastian, the artist, after the preliminaries had been settled, enquired whether they wished the saint to be represented alive or dead, a question which somewhat puzzled the envoys, who looked at each other for a few minutes without speaking. At last the brighter of the two, imagining that he had solved the difficulty, opined that he had better be painted alive—"For," he remarked, "if our people would rather have him dead, they can easily kill him at any time."

A peasant, whose father was taken suddenly ill, started off to the curé's house late at night, and remained at the door nearly three hours, knocking every now and then so gently that nobody heard him. When the priest at length came down, "What are you here for?" he asked. "And why did you not knock louder?" "My father was dying when I left him," was the reply, "but I did not like to disturb you." "Then he must be dead by this time," observed the curé, "and it is too late for me to be of any use." "Oh no, monsieur, not at all," eagerly answered his visitor; "my neighbour, Pierrot, promised me faithfully that he would keep him alive until you came."

During a recent discussion on the subject of vaccination, when its supporters and opponents had fairly exhausted their arguments, one of the company, who had not hitherto spoken, volunteered his opinion that far from being a benefit to the human race, the precaution was both dangerous and unnecessary. "I will give you a proof," he said. "The son of a friend of

mine, as healthy a little fellow as you would wish to see, was vaccinated by the advice of an idiotic medical man who attended the family, and what was the consequence? He died two days after the operation had been performed!" Here the speaker paused for a moment, evidently gratified by the impression he had made on his hearers. "Yes, gentlemen," he continued, "the poor lad, who was as active as a squirrel, was in the act of climbing a tree, when, a branch giving way, he lost his hold and was killed by the fall. Don't talk to me of vaccination after that."

French peasants, especially Normans, are the most litigious of men, never so happy as when meditating a lawsuit, and prosecuting it with an amount of energy and dogged perseverance rarely displayed by them in the ordinary occurrences of life. One of these, a native of Coutances, having, as he imagined, just cause of complaint against an equally obstinate neighbour, determined to bring the matter to an issue by consulting an advocate on the subject, and soliciting his opinion as to the probable result of a trial. After hearing the particulars of the case the lawyer shrugged his shoulders, and informed the applicant that he had not the shadow of a chance, and that, if he persisted, he would only lose his time and money; adding that a certain article of the Code Napoleon effectually barred his claim.

"An article!" exclaimed the astounded client. "What does it say?"

"You can judge for yourself when you have read it," said the advocate, handing him the volume in question, and indicating the passage alluded to.

Profiting by an instant when the other's back was turned, the wily Norman quietly tore out the leaf, stuffed it into his pocket, and gave back the book with a hypocritical sigh.

"Well, are you satisfied now?" asked the man of law.

"I suppose I must be," replied the peasant in a melancholy tone, and, taking leave of his counsellor, repaired post-haste to the house of a rival advocate, who, less scrupulous than his colleague, at once undertook the case, which, as might be expected, was finally adjudged against the plaintiff. A few days after the trial, the disconsolate suitor happening to meet the lawyer he had first consulted, "Well," remarked the latter, "you see what you have gained by not believing what I told you."

"I wish I had," was the answer; "but

I never thought I could possibly lose. It's very strange, all the same."

"Strange!" echoed the advocate; "not at all. Did you not yourself read the article that clearly settled the matter?"

"That is precisely what puzzles me," said the Norman; "considering that I lit my pipe with the very page on which that infernal article was printed, how the judges came to get hold of it passes my comprehension altogether."

In the heart of that portion of France once called Provence, is a village known by the name of Les Martigues, the inhabitants of which, generally denominated "Martigaus," have long enjoyed the reputation of being the most idiotic Boeotians on the face of the earth. One of them, chancing to visit the town of Aix on business, beheld there an object hitherto unknown to him in the shape of a pump, the water flowing freely from which struck him with admiration. It must be mentioned that, owing to the chalky soil of the locality, the Martigaus, far from possessing a superfluity of the crystal element, were frequently obliged in seasons of drought to procure a scanty supply from a distant spring; the sight, therefore, of such an apparently inexhaustible abundance of water was a novelty to the visitor, and inspired him with the bright idea of endowing his village with one of these wondrous machines, and of thereby securing for himself a well-merited popularity. With this laudable intent he repaired to the largest iron-foundry in the town, and invested six hundred francs in the purchase of a pump, the maker undertaking to transport it to Les Martigues, and fix it in a suitable place. On his arrival, he found the entire population, old and young, assembled to witness the ceremony; and was conducted to an open space in the centre of the village, selected by the notables as the most convenient spot.

"Here," said his customer, naturally taking upon himself the office of spokesman, "is the place we have chosen."

"Very good," replied the founder, looking round as if in search of something; "but where is the well?"

"The well! If we had one I shouldn't have bought the pump. What can you possibly want a well for?"

"To supply the water, of course."

"What!" cried the exasperated Martigau. "I buy your pump in order to have water, and now I am to find water for the pump! It is a scandalous imposition, and as sure

as I live, I will bring an action against you for cheating me!"

Whether he did bring the action or got his money back is not recorded; but it appears certain that fresh water is still as great a rarity as ever in the village of Les Martigues.

A museum having been opened to the public in a provincial town, the door-keeper was particularly enjoined to let no one pass without first taking charge of his stick or umbrella. Presently in sauntered an individual, his hands carelessly stuck in his pockets.

"Sticks and umbrellas to be left here," vociferated Cerberus, suspiciously eyeing the new comer, and effectually barring his progress.

"Can't you see I have neither?" impatiently exclaimed the latter.

"Then you must go back and get one," retorted the janitor. "My orders are positive, and I can't let you in without."

Shortly after the successful appearance of Henriette Sontag at the Italian Opera in Paris, a group of young fashionables, lounging before Tortoni's, were in ecstasies about her, one extolling the charm of her voice, and another her beauty. "She is certainly very pretty," chimed in a third; "but it is a great pity that one of her eyes is smaller than the other." "Smaller!" exclaimed the most enthusiastic of the party; "mon bon, your opera-glass has deceived you. If you had said larger than the other, you would have been nearer the mark."

Among the visitors to a fine art exhibition were two old ladies fresh from the country, engaged in examining with great interest a statue representing a young Greek, underneath which were inscribed the words "Executed in terra-cotta."

"Where is Terra Cotta?" asked the elder of the two, turning to her companion.

"I haven't the least idea," replied the other; "I never heard of the place before."

"Ah well," observed the first speaker, "it doesn't much signify. The poor man who was executed there is not the less to be pitied, wherever it may be."

A librarian, employed in compiling the catalogue of an extensive collection of theological works, happening to find among them a volume printed in Hebrew characters, which were perfectly unintelligible to him, was at a loss how to class it in his list. After mature consideration, he described it as follows: "Item, a book, the beginning of which is at the end."

On some one remarking to a lady, the strictness of whose educational system was proverbial, that her children were invariably dull and out of spirits, "You are quite right," she replied, "and yet I do all I can to cure them of it; but the more I whip them, the sulkier they look."

A timid Parisian bourgeois, who had more than once been robbed in that unfrequented quarter of the city bordering the Canal St. Martin, declared that he would not set foot out of doors again after nightfall. "Why don't you carry a revolver?" asked a neighbour. "What would be the use of that?" he said; "the thieves would be sure to take it from me."

A lady of mature age, not particularly well favoured by nature, had a mania for private theatricals, especially affecting the parts of youthful heroines. When complimented by a flatterer on her performance of one of these, "You are very good," she said with a becoming show of modesty; "but to represent the character properly one ought to be young and pretty." "Ah, madame," naively answered her obsequious admirer, "you have just given us a convincing proof of the contrary."

Similarly partial to amateur acting was a French Countess, who seldom omitted to indulge in her favourite pastime during her annual sojourn in a château near Paris. On one occasion she had invited a number of equally stage-struck guests, and had organised a dramatic entertainment; the inhabitants of the neighbouring village being admitted as a special favour to witness the performance. When all had passed off satisfactorily, the Countess was informed that a deputation, composed of the leading farmers of the district, solicited the honour of an interview with her and her "society." Naturally expecting to be complimented on her exertions, and not a little curious to ascertain the popular opinion of her talent, Madame de R— received her visitors most courteously; but was somewhat surprised on finding that, beyond a great deal of bowing and scraping, not one appeared to have a word to say for himself; the members of the "deputation" staring first at her and then at each other, evidently at a loss how to begin. At length the hostess, embarrassed in her turn by their prolonged silence, graciously enquired if she could be of any further service to them; whereupon one of the party summoned up courage enough to say that they had come for their "pourboire." Doubting whether she had heard aright, she

repeated the question, and was horrified by the same spokesman coolly suggesting that as they had sat out the performance without understanding a syllable of it out of respect for Madame la Comtesse (here the bowing and scraping were renewed), it was only fair that they should be paid for their trouble. How the matter was finally settled has not been handed down to us; but it is probable that the presence of so enlightened an audience was not considered indispensable to the success of any subsequent theatrical representation at the château.

On the restoration of the Bourbons in 1815 so many Royalist emigrants applied for pensions or places under the new government that the ministers, in order to ascertain the justice of their claims, found it expedient to interrogate them closely as to the political principles advocated by them in 1793. A youth, barely twenty years of age, having been presented by a lady to M. de Blacas as a candidate for a vacant post, the first question put to her by the minister was: "What was the political conduct of this young gentleman during the Revolution?"

One of the reigning belles in Paris some years ago was the Princess G——, by birth a Wallachian, whose magnificent eyes were the object of general admiration. Far from being vain of their attractive powers, she invariably maintained that although in France people chose to call them beautiful, yet in her own country, where everyone had equally fine ones, they would not even be noticed. A lady friend of hers, not over-gifted with intelligence, and afflicted with a pair of small and inexpressive eyes, listened attentively to these remarks, and mentally vowed that if evershe married, her husband should be a Wallachian, and nothing else; but where to find one of her own rank in life was for some time no easy matter. As she was rich and independent, candidates for her hand were not wanting: Poles, Greeks, and Russians by scores successively presented themselves, and were summarily dismissed; until at length a suitor of the desired nationality, and a Prince into the bargain, made his appearance, and after a very short courtship carried off his bride, who previous to their union had settled upon him the greater part of her fortune, to his estate in Wallachia. Six or eight months later the Princess G—— received a letter from the self-exiled fair one, couched in the following terms: "I might have spared myself

the misery I have undergone since my unlucky marriage with a semi-barbarian, who is hardly ever sober, and has made away with almost every sou I possessed; for I have not attained my object after all. From what you said, I imagined that the air would do wonders for me; but more than half a year has elapsed since my arrival here, and I can positively assure you that my eyes are not a bit larger than they were before!"

When the academician Baour-Lormian had completed his translation of Tasso's "Gerusalemme," he not a little astonished one of his colleagues who had been commanding the fidelity of the version by saying: "Now that I have finished my task, and have plenty of time before me, I intend to set seriously to work and learn Italian!"

"FOR HER, WHEN I AM DEAD."

A STORY.

"I FELT that I must come to you at once with an explanation. I know I might have written, but I am a bad hand at putting things on paper. You ought to have been the first to hear of—of the change in my plans; but I suppose you know it. Those confounded newspapers get hold of everything, somehow, as soon as it happens."

Paul Dorman spoke awkwardly and half apologetically, keeping his eyes fixed on the meerschaum he was trying to rekindle, and away from my face. I smoked on in silence, not helping him by question or comment.

"I never was fit for the work," he went on. "It's completely out of my line, and I should never have undertaken it. You were the right person."

"I don't think that was the general opinion," I said, not bitterly—I was very careful how I spoke on this subject—but as stating a matter of fact.

"No," he agreed with me; "but you were less unfit than I; and, after all, the choice lay between us, you and me. It seems strange now to think that we were all the world to poor old Cyril. Well, I've done my best, as far as it goes, and now I have come to beg you to take up the work where I have left it. You won't refuse me?"

It had never been my way to refuse Paul anything he asked, and still less should I do so now. I might have said of myself, as he had said of my dead cousin,

Cyril Blest, all I had in the world had been Paul and Cyril, and Cyril was dead.

"Still, I owe you an explanation," he went on, his pipe between his teeth, and his face turned to the fire, "and I declare," he broke out suddenly, "there's not a man in London to whom I wouldn't sooner make it, or who wouldn't find it easier to accept it than you, old fellow;" and he flashed one of his old frank, affectionate glances at me while he laughed embarrassedly.

I started. His words fell like a blow on an unhealed bruise. He had touched unawares the one tender, aching spot in my smoke-dried, case-hardened feelings. I was a hard, selfish man of the world in his eyes, and those of society generally; living only to shirk the responsibilities of life, and to secure to myself a share of such of its good things as came in my way, without brain or heart enough to rise to the higher levels of enjoyment, if too calculating and emotionless by nature to sink to the lower. That was Paul Dorman's idea of me, David Gwynne, and he pitied me and loved me nevertheless. Cyril Blest had done me greater justice, but he, too, gently despised my aimless, self-absorbed life, and loved me nevertheless.

We were fast friends, we three, linked by bonds forged in the young days when only such strong glow of sympathy and white-heat of enthusiasm as weld men together can be felt. We were at college together, Cyril and Paul the two most noted men of their day, each in his different line; I, perhaps, the least; and our companionship was a standing marvel even to superficial observers. Cyril was a dry, quiet, pale little man, with a bent head and thoughtful blue eyes under his spectacles, never speaking but when spoken to, and then giving short, concise answers, very much to the point, in a low, unemphatic tone. Paul was a stalwart athlete, full of animal spirits, and rather given to "gush" in his conversation—and gush was less universal in those days than now—a right-minded, kind-hearted, fairly intelligent boy. His hair has grown thin on the temples, and he goes through instead of over a five-barred gate when he comes across one now, but he has hardly outgrown his boyhood yet. I cannot describe myself, and I think Paul or Cyril would have been equally at a loss to do so. Cyril sneered softly at me because I did not read, Paul jeered openly at me because I could not row, run, or play tennis. And yet we were inseparables, and no one guessed how the successes of one or the

other would set my heart leaping and my head swimming with excitement, while the faintest, most measured words of comment were all that would rise to my lips.

There is no need to recall their varied distinctions here. Paul's wife has his by heart. He is the ideal country squire and M.P., with a model estate, Conservative principles, and his first and only love for his wife.

Cyril's career was public property. It was brief and brilliant, and the details are, or were a month ago, in everybody's mouth.

I have never read his great work, and should not understand it if I did. I am content to glory in all I hear of his marvellous talent, patient industry, and inspired insight, and to know that his book will stand as a monument of a life given to a worthy labour, long after I am dead and forgotten.

We never drifted far apart, we three. I, living in the narrow little world we call Society, saw faces come and go; fashions change, bright households disintegrate and vanish, leaving dreary blanks; houses of mourning burst forth into merrymaking for one gay season, and sink into gloom once more; beauties fade, and reputations arise and fall. And I have played my own monotonous little part in the show; but my real life was lived with Cyril in his quaint old country home, unchanged from year to year, except for the gradual deepening and heightening of the drift of papers and proof-sheets, and the lessening of the space accorded to human beings. He would come to me in town sometimes, and establishing himself in a corner of my chambers, work away peacefully, between his visits to the British Museum and his publishers. But he never went to Paul's home; he could find nothing to do there, he said, and preferred that Paul should come to him.

In that quaint old house he died, suddenly and painlessly, without a shadow of warning. There he was found, one grey morning, stark and cold, at his desk, the ink dry on the pen in his fingers, the other hand stiffened on the page of a book of reference beside him.

They sent for me as his nearest—in fact, his only relative, and I summoned Paul. His will, dated in the Cambridge days, was found at his solicitor's. In it he shared his property equally between us. That is, a certain sum of money was left to me, and his house, his library, manuscripts, and personal belongings to Paul. I had the

lion's share, and it hurt me that it should be mine.

Also Paul was left executor, and that hurt me too. I know I had made a score of cynical observations on the posthumous nuisances men made of themselves to their friends, by laying burdens of trusteeship and guardianship on them, but that Cyril should have taken me at my word cut me to the heart.

I stood aside, leaving Paul to his duty, and feeling for the first time dropped out of the fellowship. This feeling was intensified before long.

Hardly had the last screw been turned in the coffin-lid before "The Romance of Research : A Memoir of the late Professor Blest, with Diary and Correspondence," was advertised as in preparation, with an utterly unknown name on the title-page. By way of an authoritative check to the publication, Paul, by the advice of the solicitors, and at the urgent request of Cyril's publishers, was induced to announce that he was at work on a Life and Letters from the only authentic materials. The notice served its purpose, the catchpenny publication never appeared, and sooner than I could have believed possible, the first volume of Paul's memoir came out. It was uncommonly well done, so everyone said. I contributed all that was asked of me in the way of correspondence or verification of dates or incidents, and that was all. I had taken for granted that it was on some such quest that Paul presented himself unexpectedly this November evening; and was more than perplexed at his manner and words.

"I am afraid I have not caught your meaning," I answered to the remark previously made. "What have you got to explain? and what am I to do for you?" and I tried to speak as heartily as I could.

"I want you to edit the second volume of that Life," was the unexpected reply; "I cannot!" blurting it out roughly, and looking away from me directly.

"Why not? What is there that you and Martin Jebb can't manage?"

Martin Jebb was Cyril's secretary, a clever young fellow, trustworthy and scrupulous; it had been possible for Paul to leave a large share of the work in his hands; all of it, in fact, dealing with Cyril's special subjects.

Paul answered me with a shake of the head, and sat musing a while. Then he began again:

"It's no use casting about for sentences.

I've got to tell you the story, and put it as I may, it comes to the same thing in the end. After all, what does it matter what you think of me? It's Cyril's interests I've got to look to."

He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, then, deliberately laying it aside, he faced me, leaning forward, his elbows on his knees, his finger-tips lightly joined, his face upraised to mine.

"You know me pretty thoroughly, Gwynne, and whether I'm addicted to give way to whimsies and nervous fancies. Well, just listen to this. You know how we had to go at that memoir at once without much time for reflection or arrangement. 'Give us plenty of personal detail,' that little Jevons, the publisher, said. 'Let us have the man as he lived—his early escapades, his love-affairs, and money matters, and his difficulties with his family, if he had any; that's what the public want, you know. Above all, his opinions of his contemporaries. Then his last illness, and his ideas of what he was going to do if he had lived, and if you see any signs of failing in his late work you might call attention to it.' Upon my soul, Gwynne, I rejoiced in disappointing the little beggar! You are the only representative of Cyril's family. He never had a love-affair or a money trouble. If he had any opinions of his contemporaries he took good care not to leave them written down, and he died, as he had lived, without an audience. His story is the story of his work, and what else there was to tell lay ready to hand. He had a passion for preserving MSS. Every scrap of letter or note he had ever received in his life was carefully stored away in dated parcels with the reply noted down. You remember his great oak-bureau with the four arched openings above the writing-desk? The first two were marked inside, 'Private papers,' the others 'Notes on Books,' with a list of the names of the books. All was arranged in such perfect order that I simply opened parcel after parcel according to date, took what seemed best, and destroyed the remainder—and there was a first volume complete before we realised it, and before I had opened the contents of the second compartment. There was so little to tell—his old schoolmaster gave me a sketch of his early days, and a copy of an uncommonly smart essay for a little chap. Rugby was as quickly disposed of, and the rest of the book is taken up with Cambridge and the first outline of his great

work. 'It's all very unsatisfying,' that little publisher grumbles; 'a one-sided view entirely,' just because I've no record of scandalous doings, not even of scandalous sayings, to throw in for spice. I've done my honest best with it. There seems to me something infinitely touching in the very lack of personal detail—in a life so given up to making clear the path of knowledge for those who follow. I can't put it rightly, but there's even a sort of romance about it, as I see it, making a bridge of oneself for another to cross over by. Perhaps it's worth giving up all that makes the happiness of an ordinary man's life to think of the thousands of generations following whose feet one may have set in the road to Truth. You are laughing, of course!" said Paul, rousing himself from a meditative gaze into the fire. "Don't think I want to put all that sentimental bosh into print. I'm shirking the point as long as I can, you see." He had begun mechanically to refill his pipe, but pushed it from him determinedly. "As soon as I got that first volume off to the printers I set to work on the second, and, you won't believe me, but after three weeks I have not got a single page put together. I can't do it. Don't ask me why, but I can't. I have gone down there day after day, and sat down before that old bureau determined not to rise till I had made a fair beginning, and have found myself vacantly dreaming, pen in hand, hours later, and not a line written. I have unlocked that little door, and taken out parcel after parcel of letters, and been unable to bring myself to untie a string or break a seal. The first day I thought it was some kind of fit, you know," and Paul laughed uneasily; "that the change from fresh air to that close study had upset me; so I let things go for that day, tramped all over the country, and went to bed without supper. Next morning I set to work early, for I wanted to get home to Leslie—she isn't very strong just now, and always frets at the time I spend away from her there—but as soon as I sat down, the recollection of the day before came over me with such a queer, sickening feeling that I fairly jumped up in a panic and departed, telling Jebb that I shouldn't go near him again for a week. One thing after another hindered me—or I let them hinder me—till I got regularly savage with myself, and started off one evening, without telling even Leslie, in a sort of frenzy to get the job done. Jebb was overjoyed to see me, and I set to work

forthwith, sending him to bed. I got the place open, and took out a lot of papers, and was putting my hand in for more, when—I don't care whether you believe me or not—I swear I felt a heavy grasp laid on my arm stopping me. I jerked it away, and tried again, and again the grasp fell on my arm and checked me. It wasn't a nice sensation, I can tell you. I took a turn round the room, stamped about a little, and put my head out of the window, and then went back. As I marched up the room to the old bureau, pretty resolute this time to give way to no more delusions, I saw, as I advanced, the little door swing slowly on its hinges till with a click it closed, and the key fell from the lock. It has a spring catch, and a rather stiff one."

"The draught from the open window," I suggested, but he shook his head impatiently.

"Then what do you suppose it to be?"

"How do I know? It all sounds trivial enough as I hear myself tell it to you, and you have a right to judge as you please. But what I feel is that I've had a hint to leave off."

"What? A cupboard banging, and a touch of cramp! You've worked in that musty, air-tight den till you've got overstrained and nervous."

"I only go down there three days a week."

"Never mind. It has all been a severe and unusual strain on your mind. Why, you've not ground at anything so steadily since Cambridge days, I suppose?"

"Oh, I know it's perfectly easy to account for it, but I can't get over the feeling. I've tried my hardest—though indeed the way in which everything imaginable conspires to stop my getting to work is enough in itself to sicken me of the job; but, never mind that, directly I set to work back comes the dazed, dull feeling again. I can't think of a date, I can't put an intelligible sentence together, and through it all I have a horrible idea that Cyril is there watching me. Whether he is angry or urging me to persist, I cannot make out, but he is there!"

Paul stopped, shuddering. I looked at him with a secret concern. It was a case for a clever physician, I saw. This great, prosperous country squire, with his broad shoulders and happy, open face, whose very presence in sooty London was redolent of open air and fresh pastures, had the nervous system of a sensitive girl, and it had been overwrought. Too much work

of an uncongenial nature under pressure—anxiety at home, perhaps, if his wife were ailing—had broken him down.

My duty was clear enough. I had no wish to wrest from him the labour of love that had fallen to him. It was he who prayed to be relieved from it; and I don't deny that my heart gave a leap, and my face glowed at the thought that my chance had come. I knew Cyril a thousand times better than Paul had done. All that Paul had said of him I had felt in my heart ever since I had known him. I could show to the world that pure, selfless nature with the divine fire burning high and strong within, undimmed by shadow of earthly passion or sordid care. I would give my life to the work, as he had given his to others. I would teach the world—Cyril. I knew nothing of his work, but I knew him.

All this flashed through my mind while Paul sat marvelling at the selfish love of ease which hindered a ready consent.

"You are the only one he and I have to turn to," he pleaded deprecatingly; "and it needn't be much bother to you if you care to leave more to Martin Jebb than I have done."

"We must see what the publishers say first," I answered. "When shall we go and see them?"

"As early as you please to-morrow," he replied, with a relieved face. "We are staying at The Grand; won't you come to breakfast and see Leslie?"

I demurred. I would be round early, I told him. I liked well enough being in Leslie Dorman's company, but for the honeymoon still clinging about the pair to a certain extent, in spite of their half-dozen years of married life. Alone with them I felt, not envious, nor one too many, nor unsympathetic, but something of all three; perhaps I was jealous of Paul's devotion. They seldom were in town together, and always made a sort of holiday of the event. When I got to The Grand, as early as I dared, I found them side by side over a newspaper, reading the theatrical advertisements like two country cousins.

Leslie is a pretty, slender, dark-eyed woman, with a charming little air of shy dignity when left to herself, and a tendency to nestle under Paul's wing, figuratively speaking, when he was by. I thought her looking worn and ill, and noticed how her eyes grew anxious when Paul mentioned our errand. Had the same thoughts crossed her mind, I wondered, as were in mine, as she thanked me with tremulous

lips, trying hard not to speak too energetically, for inducing him to relinquish his editorship?

"He has done quite enough for friendship and his own literary reputation, has he not?" she asked. "He may very well stop now. How do we know what he may make of the second volume?" and I fancied her laugh was forced and unjoyous.

Paul was frankly jubilant. Let him get this job settled, and he and Leslie would make a day of it. They had to see about a new carriage, and look in at the winter exhibitions, and at all the bonnet-shops in Regent Street; and off he went, whistling like a blackbird, to change his coat.

"I hate memoirs!" said Leslie with an angry flush on her cheek. "I am, oh, so glad this is to end! Surely the world knows as much as need be of poor Cyril!"

"Won't you wish me well through my half of the task? Hasn't Paul told you that I am to finish the book?"

"You!" cried Leslie.

Only a monosyllable, and yet it spoke a world of wonder, anger, fear, distinctly and eloquently. I, of all men—I to usurp her husband's place! I to lay my irreverent hands on the sacred altar raised to the loved memory! I read her thoughts in a flash.

The next instant she was trying with gentle tact to pass over the subject.

"The world must have its will," she sighed. "Break lock and seal, betray the trust, keep nothing sacred."

"Ah," I interrupted, "have you so little faith in me—or in Cyril?"

Here Paul entered, and we started on our mission.

I did not leave town at once for Cyril's home. I let Paul have time to write and apprise Martin Jebb of the change we had made; and besides, I wished to clear off all outstanding business of my own that might make a future call on my time or attention. I wished to be free of all personal claims before I approached my great work. From the time that it had been definitely given into my hands I had felt encompassed and separated from my fellow men, as if by the solemnity of a sacred office laid upon me.

A great awe had fallen on my spirit, a great sense of unworthiness. What was I, to stand between the living and the dead, and out of the poverty of my own gifts to try and interpret the meaning of such a life as Cyril's? And yet I would do it, love and faith being my aid.

Martin Jebb regarded me with disfavour, I saw; or at best with a "better-than-nothing" air. He eagerly produced his share of the work, and looked contemptuously at me when I professed my inability to appreciate it.

"Shall you not find it difficult to tell the story of Professor Blest's life and omit all reference to its sole absorbing interest?" he asked.

"Did Mr. Dorman enter fully into these subjects?" was my reply.

"He tried," said Martin Jebb eagerly. "No one knows how hard he worked. Of course I did the best I could to explain everything, but he got it all up in a wonderfully short time."

"Ah, that accounts for many things," I said involuntarily.

"Do you mean in the book—blunders?" faltered poor Jebb.

"The book? No; I haven't seen it." And leaving the poor man in consternation at this admission, I turned away.

The library looked unchanged. A fire blazed on the hearth cheerily, and the writing-table was neatly arranged with fresh materials.

"Mr. Dorman used to go over the papers alone, and when he had made his selection, call for me, and we used to talk them over together, and those we rejected were destroyed at once, when we had made sure that we should not require them again," explained the young secretary.

"A very good plan; but I think I had better begin with that first volume, and study it thoroughly. It may take me all night, so I shall not require your help to-night. As early as you please to-morrow."

Jebb assented willingly, and departed.

I opened the book. It was straightforward and modestly written. I seemed to hear Paul's voice in every sentence. I should have felt drawn to the writer if I had known nothing of him. But Cyril—what would anyone learn of him from it? Nothing but the barest, baldest facts of his outer life. A painted semblance, not the living, breathing man.

I rushed through the latter half, and laid it aside. My time had come, and the dead should speak. I could not bear to lose an hour, and placed myself before the great, frowning, old bureau that reached high up the wall, heavy with quaint carving, dim-glimmering in the firelight with brass inlay and mountings.

Paul had given me a small sealed packet of keys, and this I opened. The bureau-

keys were on a labelled ring, five in all. One opened the desk and the drawers beneath it; another the first door of the four compartments above it. This was empty, as I expected. So were a third and fourth, of which the contents—notes for books commenced and finished—had been handed over to Martin Jebb. Of the second there was no key whatever. I tried them all in vain, nor was there another in the parcel that could possibly fit.

I felt unaccountably discouraged and annoyed at this discovery. Then, remembering Paul's frame of mind, I decided that the loss was not wholly inexplicable.

"There must be a locksmith in the village," I reflected; and then, resolved not to wait even for that, I drew out the drawers and lightened the huge construction as much as I could, and dragged it out from the wall.

It was a greater labour than I had guessed, but I contrived to make space enough to squeeze myself in, and then discovered the back was one solid panel, quite immovable by any attempts of mine. I replaced everything, and looked speculatively at the poker; but I shrank from any rough injury as from a sort of sacrilege. Then I tried the division between the compartments, and here chance aided me. There was a false back to them—the old, common, futile substitute for a patent lock and an iron safe—and behind it drawers for money or papers. By pressing a spring, not very difficult to discover, the divisions between each compartment folded down flat, and allowed the back to be drawn forward. I tried it, and succeeded in making the panel between number three and the locked number two give way. It folded down, and the contents lay disclosed.

It was full, heaped to the top with neatly-folded bundles of letters, some of which came toppling down, their support being removed.

I plunged my hand in, and drew forth at random. My fingers touched a parcel that felt somehow distinct from the rest—larger and more loosely put together. But as I grasped it, there fell on the back of my hand a touch—an appealing touch. I knew it—I had felt it before. Not so soft as a woman's, it was delicate, and yet firm, and thrilled me through. I stood irresolute; my forehead grew damp. Then I pulled myself together, and laughed aloud—a harsh, discordant laugh that jarred on my ears and awakened mocking echoes in the gloom of the distant corners.

The touch was withdrawn hastily, and I drew out my prize and threw it on my desk. It had been sealed, but the seals had cracked and given way with the violence of my clutch. It had been loosely put together and pushed to the very back of the compartment. Its enveloping paper was creased, and worn, and split here and there. I could see closely-written sheets of paper and some envelopes with Cyril's name. The hand, the scent that clung about them, struck on my sense with a sudden recognition, and then in one instant I was taken unawares and hurled or dragged by some invisible, intangible force away back to the centre of the room, and held there.

I struggled fiercely, for my temper rose hotly, and I remembered how I had sneered at Paul. I caught sight of myself in the dim old convex mirror—a wild figure with white, set face, one foot planted firmly to resist the force that almost bore me to the ground, one hand raised to ward off—I knew not what. The sight filled me with fresh savage strength and determination. I pressed forward, as in a struggle for life, restless, remorseless, reckless of what I trampled down before me—and my unseen opponent gave way with sudden yielding, and I fell into my chair spent and breathless as one who has wrestled with a spirit. I gathered the mass of paper up and carried it to a table before the fire where a bright lamp was burning. The change of place seemed to bring safety. I took up the first envelope that came, and drew forth the enclosura. A dark mist seemed to descend and blind my vision for an instant, but in that instant there passed through me an experience that I cannot write here.

I was still David Gwynne, but I was also Cyril Blest—Cyril, dumb, helpless, struggling for power of speech or sign, in mortal agony, and I deaf and blind to his entreaties, while my whole soul was rent by the passion of them.

It passed, and passed before the scrap of paper that had slipped from my fingers had gently fluttered down beside my foot. I stooped and picked it up, and laid it with the rest; then, with averted eyes and unfaltering hand, I dropped the pile into the depths of a glowing cavern of fire, and heaped the fuel high above it. The flames broke out, flickering high in the wide chimney, and light smoke-wreaths came swirling out into the room. They spread, grew dense, and then in their centre seemed

to grow lighter and thinner, changing from dun to rose, and so to a filmy golden mist that floated apart and showed me for one moment Cyril's face—Cyril as I had never seen him, never dared to fancy him; not angry, not grieved, but drawn and disfigured by crushing shame and anguish. The drooping lids lifted themselves languidly, and the eyes raised themselves to mine in mute, hopeless appeal, and then the smoke-wreaths gathered again, and the vision faded, leaving me alone, crying wildly with outstretched arms to Cyril to trust me—that nothing should change me, or shake my faith in him.

A little shower of glowing fragments rained down on the hearth through the black rail of the grate. One, with its little border of fiery sparks, drifted out from the rest, and for one brief second one word started out in vivid clearness. I knew the hand, and the word was "Leslie."

I let Martin Jebb think what he would about the missing keys next day. The village blacksmith did his business easily, and we set to work at ours. Every one knows the result.

"It is sincerely to be regretted," says one leading review, "that the work commenced so well by Mr. Dorman should have been abandoned to another hand. Throughout the whole of Mr. Gwynne's volume we miss the keen sympathy and intelligent appreciation which Mr. Dorman brought to his work and labour of love. Mr. Gwynne's criticisms are ungenial, his admiration perfunctory. He evidently discharges an unwelcome task, of which the reader perhaps wearies no sooner than he does."

Little Mr. Jevons, the publisher, puts it more strongly. He was in a good, honest rage with me, and he let me see it.

"Vapid and sterile, sir—that's what I consider it. 'Mere dry-as-dust gropings,' as poor Carlyle used to say. Ah, he knew what went to a popular biography! He knew how to put in the touch of nature that makes the whole world kin. This is a mistake from beginning to end. A narrow, one-sided view of a life, and all the materials for an abler and more comprehensive study of the late professor, I am given to understand, wantonly destroyed! Sir, I have no hesitation in saying you have been false to your trust, false to the memory of your friend, false to human nature, false to the British public. Good-day."

"I don't blame you, Gwynne," says Paul; "it was my fault. Poor Cyril trusted to me, not you. You did your best, of course; but—you don't mind my saying it?—I never did think it was in you to see all that poor Cyril really was."

Leslie alone is silent, and speaks not to me in praise or blame.

GERALD.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

CHAPTER XXI. OVERTAKEN.

THEO was now perfectly happy. She had been restless and impatient all through the seven hours' journey from Lucerne, where her grandmother had that morning received a note from Gerald, written in the train, and posted on his arrival at Como. Lady Redcliff's kindness had encouraged him to write to her, and he gave her his address both at Como and Milan, where he thought it not unlikely that his travellers might be gone. He ventured to ask her to let him know if she and Miss Meynell came across them anywhere on the Lakes. Lady Redcliff tossed the note to Theo, saying:

"That belongs to you. I think he is rather a presuming fellow. Why should I trouble myself about him or his concerns?"

"I thought you told him to write to you," said Theo very quietly, looking down at the note.

She had never seen his writing before, except in the register of Helen's marriage.

"What an ignorant fool, to think I meant it!" said Lady Redcliff.

All the wild beauty of that day's journey was thrown away on Theo, absorbed so deeply in her own thoughts that her grandmother spoke to her several times without being heard, and at last, with an angry little laugh, rolled up a handkerchief and threw it in her face. Then Theo woke with a start, flushing crimson.

"Yes, of course! I hate people who are in love," said Lady Redcliff. "Their manners are abominable. They are eaten up with selfishness. Now, little donkey, look out of the window; these tunnels are rather curious."

They climbed slowly between the solemn snow mountains, up the valley of the Reuss, green, foaming, rushing down. By the spiral tunnels in the mountain-side they reached Goeschinen, where it was snowing hard, and Lady Redcliff shivered among her furs, and wondered why she

had left England. Then came the twenty minutes in the tunnel, and then the wonderful change from north to south, from snow and cold to sunshine and summer. Here the Ticino foams and splashes along, its bed half choked with stones; the green beauty, the fir-groves of the Reuss valley are left behind, and on each hand rise great, bare mountain-walls, dry and bleached in the sunshine, except where the constant waterfalls come flying down, half blown away in mist long before they reach the river.

Lady Redcliff had determined to stay a night or two at Locarno, and to go on by steamer to Baveno, where she meant to spend the next week or two. While she was talking about rooms to the manager of the hotel, Theo had asked if she might look at his visitors'-book, and there, among the arrivals of the day before, she had seen "Miss A. Fane, C. Litton, W. Warren, England." She followed her grandmother upstairs, smiling to herself. The one thought in her mind was: "How glad he will be!"

But she was not the first, after all, with her discovery, for Combe met her in the gallery. She had half recognised Miss Fane as she passed her on the stairs, and a word to Susanne had made all clear. That poor young lady was travelling with her brother and another gentleman, and the brother was not very kind to her, and she had spent all the morning crying in her room.

Theo did not wait to take her hat off, or to speak to her grandmother, but went downstairs at once in search of Ada.

A very few minutes of talk was enough to make the frightened child as happy as her friend. Gerald had followed her; Miss Meynell had seen him; she had his address, and he would be here very soon; she would take care of Ada till he came.

"But I never thought of your being abroad, too," said Ada, still resting her tired head against the arm that pressed her close, and looking up with a sort of adoration into the sweet face that bent over her. "I wrote to you two days ago in London."

"Did you? I'm so glad," said Theo in a low voice.

Ada did not quite understand her, or the expression of her eyes, which seemed to have a light of triumph in them; but just then she could hardly realise anything but her own safety.

The poor, worried little brain might rest

in peace now; no more plans of escape need be made. Ada's faith in Theo was so perfect that the possibility of Clarence's still carrying her off did not enter her mind at all.

"Come along," said Theo presently. "We will telegraph to Como and Milan, and then you shall come with me to my room."

Sitting in Theo's window opposite the mountains, already beginning to glow with sunset beauty; talking, laughing, asking questions about Gerald; now and then in a silent rapture watching Theo as she wandered about the room, or following with satisfied eyes the slow, solid movements of Combe in her unpacking—the very image of English safety and respectability—Ada was perfectly happy.

Theo herself had a little relapsed into dreaminess. She had, of course, told her grandmother what had happened, and Lady Redcliff had said very crossly :

"Very well, you are a great fool. But I suppose the gods have set their hearts on ruining you, so there's nothing more to be said. I don't mean to take charge of any more girls, I can assure you."

After this she turned on Sparrow, who was doing something wrong as usual, and Theo went away to her new possession. But presently, as Ada sat there in the window, the door between the two rooms was flung open, startling her so much that she sprang to her feet, and Lady Redcliff walked in.

"You seem nervous," she said, nodding at Ada.

"Miss Fane, grandmamma," said Theo.

"Thank you; we don't want an introduction," said Lady Redcliff. "I know your brother; he was good-natured to me on the journey. He has a special devotion to old women, hasn't he?"

"I don't know," said Ada, very much alarmed, for Lady Redcliff's sharp black eyes were looking her through.

"Don't you?" said the old lady. "Well, you are not the least like him. He is a nice brown, like all the Fanes. I suppose you get your colouring from the other side. It's very pretty and picturesque in itself, but I don't like it."

Ada stared in still greater astonishment.

"Don't frighten her," said Theo, smiling.

"I am not frightening her," said Lady Redcliff. "I knew the Fanes before you were born. But as you choose to mix yourself up with her family affairs, I must

know what is going on. Why have you quarrelled with your eldest brother, may I ask, Miss Fane? He is much older than the other, isn't he? and much more fit to take care of you."

"No, he is not fit at all," said Ada, colouring scarlet.

"Why do you ask questions when you know?" said Theo in a low voice.

"I only know what you have told me. Is it all true that she has told me about this persecution?" said Lady Redcliff, much more gently, to Ada.

Combe, at a sign from her mistress, went out of the room.

"Oh yes, it is all true," said Ada with an appealing look at Theo.

"But don't you see," said Lady Redcliff, "that if I take possession of you now—tonight—and keep you under my care till your brother comes, as this creature tells me I ought, I shall be doing what I have no right in the world to do? I shall have a scrimmage with your eldest brother, and the right will be on his side, do you observe. Suppose he wants to carry you off by the first boat to-morrow morning, am I expected to hinder him, pray?"

Ada still looked at Theo, who smiled quietly and said :

"I don't know whether you or I will keep her, grandmamma, but she certainly shall not go."

"Please yourself, as you generally do, but you will make a fine scandal," said Lady Redcliff, and she vanished through the door as quickly as she had appeared.

Clarence Litton came in from his walk, changed his coat for dinner, and went to his sister's door. As he stood there and knocked, Susanne passed, shaking her head and smiling :

"Mademoiselle is not there."

"Where is she, then?" said Clarence very sharply, with a sudden fear that the child might have run away.

"Not far off," said Susanne. "With the demoiselle who arrived this afternoon. Monsieur need not derange himself. She is quite well now; she is going down to dinner."

"What lady arrived this afternoon?" said Clarence with a stern look.

"An English party," said Susanne, shrugging her shoulders. "An old lady, a young lady, and three servants. Acquaintances of mademoiselle, and no doubt of monsieur, too, but I cannot tell their names."

Clarence hesitated a moment, then ran

downstairs, went to the office, and found out what he wanted to know.

He was very much disturbed. Miss Meynell's arrival seemed likely to spoil all his plans. Her sudden appearance was quite as bad as Gerald's, if not worse. He was afraid of her very name ; it was only too likely that she knew of that blackest passage in his life—and yet, then, would she still be kind to Ada ? Possibly Captain North had not told her again, Captain North himself might be abroad, might join his cousin at any moment. For every reason, Locarno was not a place to stay in. They must be off the next morning somewhere, no matter where, taking Ada with them. Clarence wished for the hundredth time that he had never brought her away from England.

Mr. Warren laughed when Clarence told him of this new complication. He rather enjoyed his friend's confusion, and professed himself glad that Miss Ada had found somebody to speak to.

Lady Redcliff and her granddaughter came down to dinner, bringing Ada with them, but she left them at the dining-room door and joined her brother, taking her place as usual between him and Mr. Warren. Theo, as she followed her grandmother up the other side of the table, looked at Clarence Litton and made him a slight bow, which he returned gravely. She and Ada were too far apart to speak to each other at dinner, but her eyes were often turned that way ; they were full of anger and sympathy as she caught a word now and then of Mr. Warren's jokes, and saw the colour rise in Ada's cheeks at some of his rude, familiar ways and speeches. Clarence Litton bent over his plate with a gloomy face, drank a great deal, and hardly spoke a word ; but his friend seemed to be in the highest spirits, specially and unbearably agreeable. Many eyes besides Theo's were turned on Ada with pity and curiosity as his noisy voice went on. Lady Redcliff, among others, often glanced that way with an odd little cat-like grin. Before anyone else had finished, she got up, and went away to the reading-room on her granddaughter's arm.

"Won't the people bore you ? Wouldn't you rather go upstairs ?" said Theo.

"No ; I have a little business to do first—a little game to spoil," said Lady Redcliff. "That is an animal indeed."

"I told you he was quite out of the question," said Theo.

"The other looks presentable, but he has

a bad face, and he is dreadfully afraid of us ; he knows very well that we are the avengers," said Lady Redcliff.

"Are you going to speak to him ? What shall you say ?"

"Leave that to me. Yes, I must have some talk with Mr. Litton, but don't let the other come near me," said Lady Redcliff cheerfully.

Theo looked at her and smiled.

"You will take charge of Ada, then, grandmamma ?"

"Nothing of the kind. I should be a kidnapper myself. I shall try to make them stay here till the brother comes, as you were officious enough to telegraph for him. After that I shall have nothing more to do with any of them, nor will you. They are not a respectable set of people."

Theo gave her a curious glance, and then said with a little sigh :

"Here they are."

The three came in from the dining-room together. Mr. Warren went to the other side of the room with a newspaper. Ada crept round to the back of Theo's chair ; Clarence, who did not wish to behave like the coward he felt, walked up to the table, and began turning over the leaves of a book.

"Miss Fane," said Lady Redcliff, "I should like to know your brother. Will he come and talk to me ?"

Clarence thus found himself suddenly seized upon. He glanced at Theo, but she was not looking at him. A minute later, the people who were coming into the room saw nothing remarkable in the group by the fire : an old lady in an armchair ; a tall, well-dressed man standing up and talking to her, apparently on easy and pleasant terms ; a young woman, beautiful and silent, sitting a little in the background, sometimes smiling faintly at some touch or word from a fair, pretty girl leaning on the back of her chair. Theo was listening with a kind of spell-bound interest to her grandmother's talk with Clarence Litton. Lady Redcliff could be charming when she chose ; she was charming now. The sharp edges of her talk flashed at first without cutting ; she chattered to Clarence in such a pleasant way that he was almost thrown off his guard, and did not recognise one of the Fates in this little, dark old woman. But presently he began to listen more gravely, and to remember his position, for Lady Redcliff was telling him of their meeting with his brother Gerald, who was anxious to overtake and join him. This

news made it hard for Clarence to keep up his agreeable indifference.

"Really! You surprise me; I had no idea Gerald was abroad," he said calmly enough. "And where did you meet him?"

"At Dover, and he travelled with us to Basle, where we were sorry to part," said Lady Redcliff. "He ran after you in a great hurry, but he must have missed you, I suppose. There is a likeness between you—more than I should have expected, for he is very like the Fanes, and, of course, you have nothing to do with them. I used to know some of them very well."

"Ah!" said Clarence thoughtfully, after she had gone on for a minute or two. "I wonder where Gerald may be now?"

"He will be here to-morrow," said Lady Redcliff; "at least, I think so, for he seems to be a devoted sort of brother. He asked me to let him know if I came across you anywhere, so I telegraphed to Como and Milan this afternoon."

"Indeed! That was very kind of you," said Clarence.

"You were out, and couldn't be consulted," said Lady Redcliff, "and I thought poor Mr. Fane might go chasing on as far as Florence or Rome. Yes, I felt sure you would all be obliged to me. Your sister quite thought so."

"Oh, certainly," said Clarence. He could not trust himself to look up, so he gazed at the hearthrug, and slowly stroked and pulled his moustache. "He will miss us again, unfortunately," he said. "My friend and I have decided to go on to-morrow morning."

The next moment he called himself a fool for saying this, but it was too late.

"Indeed! Where?" said Lady Redcliff.

"I don't know. We have not decided. But my sister and I are travelling with him, you see—and I don't suppose my brother's coming is certain enough—your kind telegrams might not reach him, after all, and we might be delayed for nothing. We business people have not much time to spare."

"Really! haven't you?" said Lady Redcliff. "Well, I can't exactly propose that we should become one party, for an old woman like me would be a drag upon you, and there are other reasons. But I find your sister does not much care to go on into Italy with you. Suppose you and your friend go off to-morrow, leaving her with me till your brother joins us? Now consider—you will be much more independent without a girl on your hands."

Lady Redcliff flashed a glance round at Theo and Ada, one of whom looked absent and unconscious, while the other was blushing, and trying as well as she could to hide her anxiety and agitation.

"It is very good of you, Lady Redcliff," said Clarence after a pause, "to interest yourself in our concerns, but I am sure my sister would be in your way."

"I will punish you for this little plot, Miss Ada," he thought to himself. "You think you are quite safe, and that I can't refuse, but you will find yourself mistaken."

"We are a party of women already," said Lady Redcliff, not at all choosing to understand his tone. "So that is settled, is it? Don't thank me; I am glad to be of use."

"You will let me thank you for your kind intention," said Clarence coolly. "I do not wish to leave my sister behind, as she knows. It is natural that she should wish to stay with people who are good enough to take an interest in her; but, thank you, it is impossible."

"Oh!" said Lady Redcliff very expressively. "Very well. She must be ready to start to-morrow morning. Is that it?"

Clarence bowed. Then, as Lady Redcliff said no more, he thought the conversation might as well end. He looked across at Ada, who was startled by the angry glance he gave her, but at the same moment he met Theo's eyes full of such scorn that he dropped his own, and walked away. Presently he and Warren went out into the loggia together.

Lady Redcliff remained for a few minutes staring quietly into the fire. Then she turned round, and said in a low voice to Theo:

"Go upstairs now. Take Miss Fane with you, and don't come down again. Send Sparrow to me in half an hour."

It was quite an hour later, and every one else had left the reading-room, when Clarence and Mr. Warren came in again, and found the little old lady sitting alone by the fire.

She had sent Sparrow away, and was waiting for them there, but they did not know that.

"Is it a fine night, Mr. Litton?" she said, without looking up.

Clarence assured her that it was beautiful.

"Miss Fane ought to have been out, enjoying it too," Warren said to him. "Excuse me, Lady Redcliff, but I hear you

wish to deprive our tour of its greatest attraction."

Lady Redcliff lifted her eyes then. They were very bright and cold, and she looked at Warren from head to foot with a sort of diamond hardness. She did not mean to waste her words on a creature of his level, still less, as he had presumed to speak to her. A look was quite enough for him.

"Can I speak to you alone, Mr. Litton?" she said.

"Are you going to the smoking-room? I'll follow you directly," said Clarence to his friend, who grunted, and went out of the room.

"Now, you have put me in a disagreeable position," said Lady Redcliff to Clarence, as he came near to her, and stood in his former place, looking down on the hearthrug.

He could not restrain a slight smile.

"Well, do you know, I might almost say the same," he murmured.

"Very true. I'm glad you feel it," said Lady Redcliff. "We understand each other, then. You might as well have given in quietly before, because you must have seen that I meant to have my own way."

"I really could not—" began Clarence.

"So you said; but, my dear Mr. Litton, the fact of the matter is this: I do not mean your little sister to marry that man. She is a pretty child; she hates him; he is much too old for her, and a horrid, vulgar person besides. You know all that. You are mixed up with him in business—too much for your own good. You say that her refusal will ruin you. That sounds like a pitiful case; but, even if it is true, it is no reason for sacrificing her."

"It is true, I assure you," said Clarence.

"Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Now you are wondering what business this is of mine. Well, I might have been her great-aunt. You don't understand me, and that is nothing to the purpose. But I think you will see daylight if I mention that I am slightly connected with the North family."

Clarence could not exactly blush, but he changed colour in a curious way, and muttered after a moment:

"I knew that Miss Meynell was related to them."

"Very closely indeed; but don't bring

her name in, please. That affair of yours was hushed up at the time; but I know all about it, and I suppose, if I chose to use my information, I might do you a little mischief still, though it is so long ago."

Clarence bent his head.

"And why do you remind me of it now, Lady Redcliff?"

"Because I want to prevent you from carrying your sister off to-morrow."

"I see. But if you know—I wonder that you choose to have anything to do with my sister."

"Her name is not the same as yours," said Lady Redcliff. "There is a black sheep in most families, after all; but he doesn't generally pose as the head of the family, and arrange marriages for his sisters. Now, will you do as I ask you? Will you leave Miss Fane with me till her own brother comes to take charge of her?"

"You are asking me to ruin myself, and him too," said Clarence.

"Come, I dare say you are useful to that friend of yours, and he won't be as bad as his word," said Lady Redcliff good-naturedly. "I am a much more dangerous enemy. When I set about ruining a man, I do it thoroughly. And as for your brother, I don't care if he does lose that work of his. He is made for better things than grubbing in a coal-mine. However, here's my maid," as Sparrow timidly opened the door. "You will let me carry out my little plan, Mr. Litton?"

"As you are so kind," said Clarence.

"That's settled. Good-night," said Lady Redcliff.

She gave him a friendly nod, and went out of the room, leaving him in a state of bewildered defeat.

"Dear me, I do love a rogue!" the old lady said in a clear, loud voice, as the startled Sparrow helped her upstairs.

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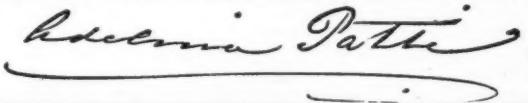
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